

COLLEY CIBBER's Whimsical Wager.

IT is well known that the late Colley Cibber was engaged in a paper war with Pope ; and being told one day, that Pope intended to prosecute him, for making too free with his character, Cibber happened to be in a peevish temper, and said, " He may kiss my a—e." One of his friends, who was on the banter, observed, that was not language for a gentleman ; and that he was sure that he [Cibber] would not say so to Pope's face.— " By G—d, Sir, (says Colley) I would tell so, or any puppy that should offer to take his part.

This assertion was what they were fishing for, and they now perceived him to be in a right cue to be worked up to any pitch ; and so it proved ; for, before they parted, they provoked him to lay a bet of one hundred guineas, that he would bid Pope kiss his a—e in the public playhouse ; bid the company he sat with kiss his a—e, let them be who they would ; bid box, pit, and gallery, separately, kiss his a—e ; likewise, and in conclusion, bid the whole house kiss his a—e.

This wager soon got wind, and it was generally known, that Pope intended being at the play the next night. When the time came, the house was crowded. It being the beginning of term, the Solicitor and Attorney General were both in the stage-box, according to ancient custom ; and who should be perched between them, but Alexander the Little. Well, Colley had bought the collar, and he was determined to go through with it ; so, just when the last music was playing, and the curtain ready to be drawn up, he rang and pushed boldly on the stage.—Cibber bowed ; the house clapped. He bowed again ; all was attention ; and he thus began : " Ladies and Gentlemen, I have a story to tell you ; to which, if you do not honour me with a patient hearing, I must lose one hundred guineas." Upon this an universal clap ensued, and a general cry of, The story ! the story ! He thus proceeded :

" You must know, Ladies and Gentlemen,

" that there lived in this city, an honest old Trencher-maker, who had saved a very considerable fortune ; and having two sons, named KILL-'EM-ALL, and KISS-MY-ARSE, he bequeathed his landed estate to eldest son Kill-'em-all, and his business and stock in trade, to the youngest son Kiss-my-arse. Now it happened, Ladies and Gentlemen, that Kill-'em-all in a few years spent his patrimony ; and what does he do, but sets up the business of trencher-making directly under the nose of his brother Kiss-my-arse. It is an old saying, that, Two of a trade can never agree ; and I am sure it is a true one ; for no sooner had the opposition begun, but the brothers began to hate the sight of each other ; so that if they both chanced to be at the play the same night, you would see Kill-'em-all in the pit, and Kiss-my-arse in the gallery ; or else Kill-'em-all in the gallery, and Kiss-my-arse in the pit. Indeed, sometimes you might see Kill-'em-all in the pit or gallery ; and Kiss-my-arse in the box. Bye-and-bye they got into a paper war ; but as neither of them could write themselves, they employed scribblers on each side to do it for them ; so Kill-'em-all chose your humble servant, and Kiss-my-arse Mr. Pope [bowing to him.] Soon after the commencement of the paper-war, they went to law with each other about defamation. Kill-'em-all chose for council the Solicitor General, and Kiss-my-arse Mr. Attorney General :—No, I mistake : Kill-'em-all chose the Attorney General, and Kiss-my-arse Mr. Solicitor [bowing occasionally to both.] At last, by the interposition of friends, they agreed to submit it to an arbitration ; and then it was finally settled, that, to obviate subsequent disputes, Kill-'em-all's trenchers should, for the future, be made all square, and those of Kiss-my-arse all round."

This piece of humour was received with great applause, and Cibber won his wager.